

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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-----127297 291626Z /41

R 291547Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5661
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 10766

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: SCHEDULE FOR A SETTLEMENT

1. WE WANT TO SIGNAL OUR CONCERN WITH THE SCHEDULE FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN HAS DEVELOPED FOR REACHING A SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA. HE ENVISAGES IN EARLY JULY A SECOND ROUND BY THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP WITH ATTENTION PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND THE RHODESIA FRONT. AFTER THESE SEVERAL DAYS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE GROUP--OR AT LEAST GRAHAM--WOULD RETURN TO LONDON TO PUT TOGETHER FINAL SETTLEMENT PROPOSALS WHICH OWEN WOULD THEN SUBMIT TO THE CABINET FOR MINISTERIAL APPROVAL. A SIDE TRIP TO WASHINGTON MIGHT BE WORKED IN AT THIS POINT. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY WOULD HIMSELF THEN RETURN TO SOUTHERN AFRICA BEFORE THE LAST WEEK IN JULY TO PRESENT THE PACKAGE TO THE INTERESTED PARTIES. WE THINK THIS IS TOO HASTY.

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2. OWEN IS CONCERNED THAT:
--THE MOMENTUM OF THIS CURRENT INITIATIVE MIGHT
FALTER OR EVEN DRAIN AWAY IF STRETCHED INTO AUGUST OR
BEYOND;
--THERE IS AN EVER GROWING LIKELIHOOD OF ANOTHER
SERIOUS MILITARY INCIDENT--A MAPAI-LIKE INCURSION OR AN

EXPLOSION ON THE ZAMBIAN BORDER--WHICH WOULD DISCREDIT THE CONCEPT OF NEGOTIATIONS AND PERHAPS CAUSE THE PRESENT EFFORT TO COLLAPSE;

--THE SMITH REGIME, ALREADY UNDER ENORMOUS STRESS, MIGHT SUDDENLY THROW IN THE TOWEL WHICH IN TURN COULD TRIGGER THE CHAOS OF A MASS WHITE EXODUS;

--THE BELEAGUERED LABOR GOVERNMENT IN LONDON MIGHT NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH TO CARRY THE BURDEN OF A RHODESIA SETTLEMENT LATER IN THE YEAR;

--THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WILLING TO BE HELPFUL NOW BUT COULD BE LESS FAVORABLY DISPOSED IN THE AUTUMN WHEN US-SOUTH AFRICAN DIFFERENCES MAY HAVE BECOME MORE CONFRONTATIONAL.

THESE ARE ALL VALID FEARS.

3. WE WOULD ARGUE THAT:

--IT IS UNLIKELY THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP WILL EMERGE FROM THE NEXT ROUND WITH MUCH MORE THAN A CLEAR DEFINITION OF THE EXTREME DIFFERENCES AMONG THE PARTIES; AN ATTEMPT TO COMPOSE THESE DIFFERENCES IN LONDON WITHOUT FURTHER CONSULTATIONS RISKS A SETTLEMENT PACKAGE WHICH NO ONE WILL ACCEPT, OR PERHAPS WORSE, WHICH ONLY SOME WILL ACCEPT;

--THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP HAS BEEN ITS MEASURED, ALMOST METHODOICAL APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS WHICH HAS KEPT ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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PERMITTED NONE SO FAR TO JUMP OFF;

--PAST EFFORTS TO REACH A SETTLEMENT HAVE INDICATED THAT THE RUG CAN BE PULLED OUT FROM UNDER AN INITIATIVE WITH A JERK FROM ALMOST ANY DIRECTION; THE OWEN SCHEDULE DOES NOT ENVISAGE WHAT WE SEE AS THE NECESSARY AND CONTINUAL CLOSE CONSULTATIONS WITH US, WITH THE FRONT-LINE PRESIDENTS, WITH THE SOUTH AFRICANS AND NIGERIANS, OR WITH THE POTENTIAL DONORS TO THE ZIMBABWE DEVELOPMENT FUND OR THE COMMONWEALTH PEACEKEEPING FORCE;

--EUROPE DOES NOT CLOSE ENTIRELY IN AUGUST AND THE LABOR CABINET WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO MAKE THE SORTS OF IMMEDIATE DECISIONS REQUIRED BY A RHODESIAN SETTLEMENT;

--EVEN IF A SETTLEMENT WERE OBTAINABLE AT THE END OF JULY, WHICH WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT, THERE WOULD NEVERTHELESS FOLLOW A DEAD PERIOD OF MORE THAN TWO MONTHS BEFORE PARLIAMENT HERE COULD CONSIDER THE ENABLING LEGISLATION;

--IF THE WORK OF THE NAMIBIA CONTACT GROUP MOVES FORWARD ON SCHEDULE, WE RUN THE DANGER OF STRAINING THE COOPERATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICANS IN AUGUST.

4. WE RECALL THAT DR. OWEN WAS ANXIOUS TO CONVENE A FULL-SCALE CONFERENCE IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS APRIL TRIP TO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 10766

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AFRICA WHEN IN FACT NO BASIS FOR A NEGOTIATION HAD BEEN PRDVELOPED.
MOREOVER, THE INCIDENT OVER THIS PAST
WEEKEND--OWEN'S SUGGESTION THAT THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP
VISIT SALISBURY BEFORE MEETING THE PATRIOTIC FRONT IN
LUSAKA--HAD THE PRECIPITOUS CHARACTER OF SQUEEZING UN-
FORESEEN EVENTS INTO A PREDETERMINED SCHEDULE.

5. WHILE WE CANNOT DISCOUNT A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH BY THE
CONSULTATIVE GROUP DURING ITS FORTHCOMING ROUND OF
TALKS, WE THINK IT MORE LIKELY THAT THE GRAHAM-LOW MISSIO
WILL ONLY JUST BE COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE HARD ISSUES
AND THE EXTREME POSITIONS OF THE PARTIES. WE BELIEVE
CONSIDERATION OF A THIRD ROUND BY THE GROUP MAY THEN BE
NECESSARY--FOLLOWING CAREFUL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE NON-
RHODESIAN PARTIES INTERESTED IN THE DISPUTE--TO TEST
THE FLEXIBILITY OF VIEWS AND TO ISOLATE PRECISELY THE
POSITIONS WHICH NEED TO BE BRIDGED. AT THIS STAGE, PER-
HAPS IN SEPTEMBER, WITH ALL THE MANY DUCKS IN A ROW,
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OWEN COULD THEN PRESENT HIS PROPOSALS. AS THE SCHEDULE NOW STANDS, THE EXTREME POSITIONS OF THE RHODESIA FRONT AND THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ARE TO BE ANSWERED BY THE FINAL POSITION OF THE BRITISH. WE DO NOT THINK THIS ADVISABLE.

6. OWEN ATTRACTIVELY PUTS A HIGH PREMIUM ON BOLDNESS-- AND WE APPRECIATE THE HISTORICAL IRONY OF OUR URGING CAUTION ON THE BRITISH--BUT WE ARE DISTURBED THAT THE BOLDNESS OF THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S INITIATIVE MAY NOW BE PRECIPITATE.

BREWSTER

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